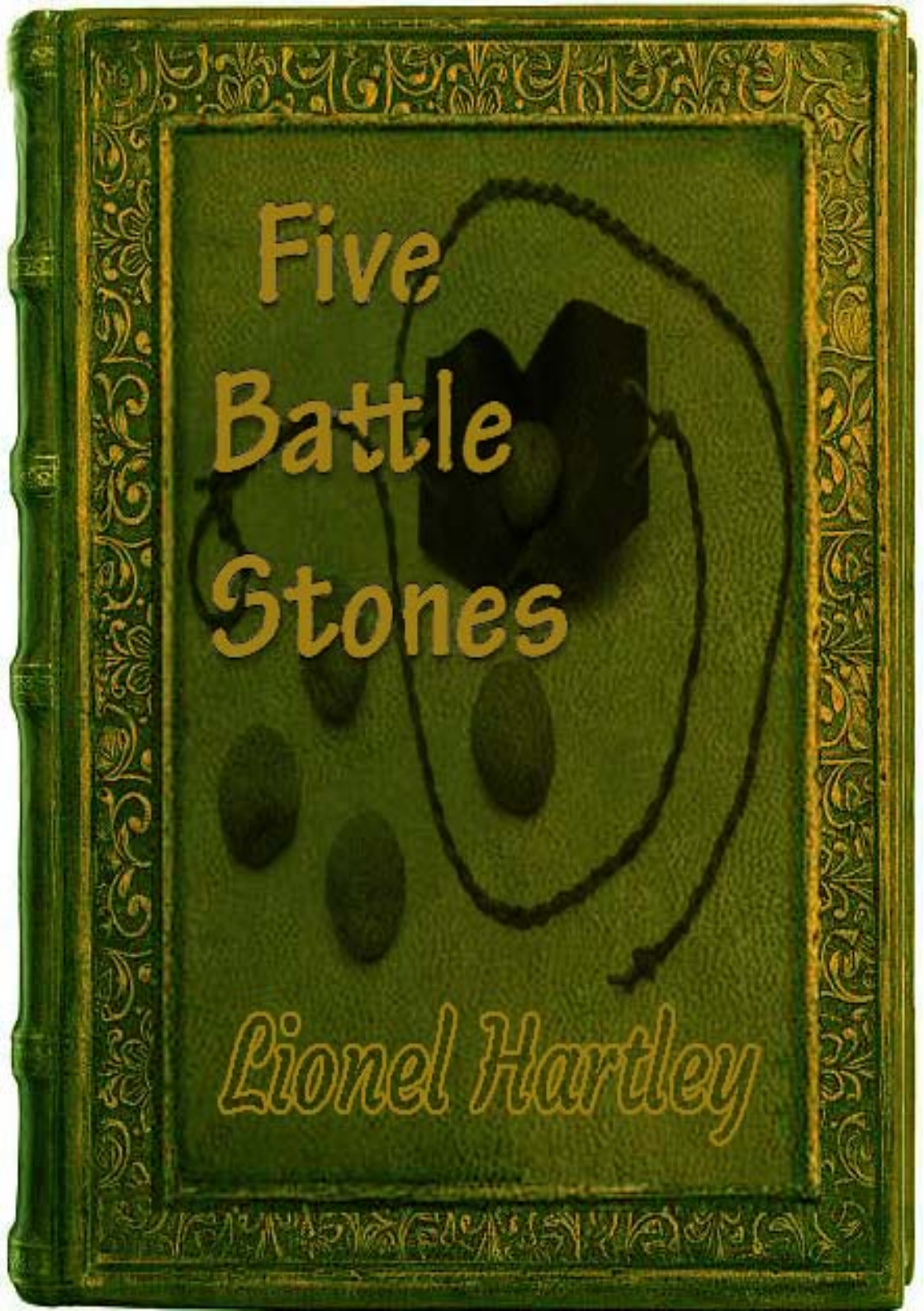
Five
Battle
Stones
Lionel Hartley

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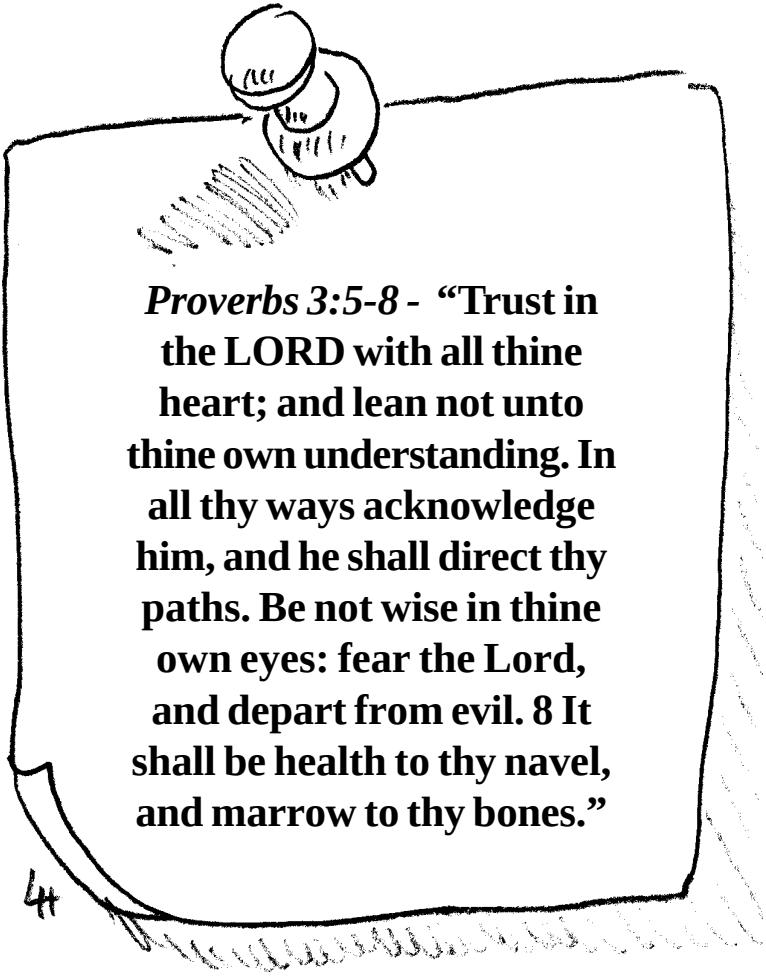


Proverbs 3:5-8 **- "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil. 8 It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones."**

Preparing for Battle

By way of introduction, here is a true story entitled *"Choppy Skies - A white-knuckle flight on Air Zimbabwe"* by Gaby Plattner*.

It seems that Plattner was travelling with a backpacking group through Africa as they found themselves waiting in Kariba airport for a flight to Hwange .

"Our flight was delayed, so we settled down to wait. And wait. Three hours later, we were finally told the plane was ready to board. Air Zimbabwe bought many of its planes second-hand from other airlines, and the one we got into was no exception. Dirty and ancient, the mid-size jetliner was clearly one that no one else had wanted.

Inside, we settled into the seats with 80 or 90 other passengers and waited. And waited some more. Finally, the pilot's voice came over he loudspeaker.

** Source: Chicago Tribune "Travel" section for Sunday, June 6, 1999.*

'We're all ready to go ladies and gentlemen. However, we've been waiting for the co-pilot, and he still hasn't arrived. Since we've already waited so long, we're just going to be flying without a co-pilot today.'

There was a nervous buzz through the cabin. He continued, 'If any of you feel uncomfortable with this, feel free to disembark now and Air Zimbabwe will put you on the next available flight to Hwange.' Here he paused. 'Unfortunately, we are not sure when that will be. But rest assured, I have flown this route hundreds of times, we have clear blue skies, and there are no foreseeable problems.'

No one in Plattner's group, doubtful as they might have been, wanted to wait any longer at Kariba for a plane that may or may not materialise, so they stayed on-board for the one-hour flight.

Once the aircraft reached cruising altitude, the pilot came on the loudspeaker again 'Ladies and gentlemen. I am going to use the bathroom. I have put the plane on auto-pilot and everything will be fine. I just don't want you to worry.'

That said, he came out of the cockpit, fastened the door open with a rubber band to a hook on the wall.

Then he went to the bathroom.

Plattner continues: Suddenly, we hit a patch of turbulence. Nothing much - the cabin just shook a little for a moment. But the rubber band snapped off with a loud *'fff-twang!'* and went sailing down the aisle.

The door promptly swung shut.

A moment later, the pilot came out of the bathroom. When he saw the closed door, he stopped cold. I watched him from the back and wondered what was wrong.

The stewardess came running up, and together they both tried to open the door. But it wouldn't budge.

It slowly dawned on me that our pilot was locked out of the cockpit. Cockpit doors lock automatically from the inside to prevent terrorists from entering. Without a co-pilot, there was no one to open the door from the inside.

By now, the rest of the passengers had become aware of the problem, and we watched the pilot, horrified. What would he do?

After a moment of contemplation, the pilot

hurried to the back of the plane. He returned holding a big axe. Without ceremony, he proceeded to chop down the cockpit door. We were rooted to our seats as we watched him.

Once he managed to chop a hole in the door, he reached inside, unlocked the door, and let himself back in.

Then he came on the loudspeaker, his voice a little shakier this time than before. 'Ah, ladies and gentlemen, we just had a little problem there, but everything is fine now. We have plans to cover every eventuality — even pilots getting locked out of their cockpits. So relax and enjoy the rest of the flight!'

Many decades ago I was a Boy Scout and our motto was, "Be Prepared".

Our glimpse at five battle stones begins with looking at the importance of preparation.

Once upon a time there was a significant day.

A day of high adventure and great danger. War clouds were in the air. Battle lines were forming. It was a day when a man could become either a cadaver or a champion.

But not for young David. He awoke every day to care for sheep. Were I he, then life would be dull.

The same thing every day: lead the sheep to grass, and then lead the sheep to water, and then lead the sheep to grass, and then lead the sheep to the pen. And then get up the next day and do the same thing again. And sheep have a reputation, justified or not, for not being the most co-operative and apt to stray.

Of course, there had been times of excitement in the past. David would have remembered the day that the lion attacked the sheep and the time the bear came at the flock. Now that was excitement.

But today, perhaps the only ones in his family facing any excitement were his three older brothers. They were in the army and they were in battle with the Philistines.

How exciting it may be to trade places with them — or even find out what was happening at the battlefront.

Now, I have no idea whether David was bored with shepherding or not, but knowing that his brothers might be in danger and not being able to do anything

about it would have tugged at his heart. It had been about 40 days that his brothers had been gone now and he did not know how they were or how the war was going.

Fortunately for David, he wasn't the only one who was anxious. His dad wanted to know how his three eldest boys were doing. So David got his big break from sheep tending.

1 Samuel 17:20-24, “And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him; and he came to the trench, as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle. For Israel and the Philistines had put the battle in array, army against army.”

“And David left his carriage in the hand of the keeper of the carriage, and ran into the army, and came and saluted his brethren. And as he talked with them, behold, there came up the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, out of the armies of the Philistines, and spake according to the same words: and David heard them. And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid.”

This Goliath was not your usual soldier. Not even your usual big soldier.

Elsewhere in this chapter it tells us that he was six and a half cubits tall, which, translated into Australasian is three and a third metres (I find it easier to picture this in imperial measure as 11 feet tall).

As tall as he was, his body was built more for football than basketball because we are told that the armour that he wore on his chest and stomach weighed nigh on 50 kilos or 110 pounds.

I suppose that many of you have seen the Olympic shot-put. Taking a great weighty ball and thrusting it into the air from the shoulder.

Well, the head of the spear that Goliath carried weighed hardly more than a kilo or only 3 pounds less than a hefty Olympic-weight shot-put ball.

Had I been David, I would have decided that I had all the excitement that I needed and would exit back to my sheep, even with the occasional lion or bear.

How many times have you been telling an exciting story, or telling a joke, and half way through the listener announces that he or she has heard it before?

Now this is an exciting story, and probably every one of you has heard it before. Even my grandchildren have heard about this story (and they don't know much about World War II.)

The end of this story is that David kills Goliath, saves the country, becomes a hero, and he gets the girl. (If you didn't know the part about getting the girl, you can confirm that by reading the next chapter.) As I say, it's a great story with a great ending. Like the kind that we likely like to like.

But as much as we may like the ending, which you already know about, I suggest that the middle part is where the lessons are. Perhaps you don't remember that part quite as well, so that is what we will be investigating here.

In 1 Samuel 17 verse 40, David rejects the traditional way that a soldier would protect himself, and embarks upon his preparation for battle.

1 Samuel 17:40, "And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip [that's a pouch in the side of the bag]; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the

Philistine."

Did I read, "He chose five smooth stones"?

The author James Hastings tells us that over the door of a church in Scotland are carved the three Hebrew words, *laqach nephesh chakam* from Proverbs 11:30. These are translated in our Bible, "He that winneth souls is wise". They were put there as an indication of the object of the church's existence, and also in the hope that some Jews passing by might see them, and come in to worship the God of Abraham.

A certain Dr. Bonar preached from these words on the day on which the church was opened, explaining that "winning" was the word used to describe a hunter stalking game, and reminding "soul-winners" that their work must be done in a wise way.

He said, "How carefully David prepared to meet Goliath! He chose five smooth stones out of the brook. He did not assume that one would be lying by his hand when he needed it. Never go to the Lord's work with meagre preparation."

I recall my mother telling me, "It is better to look ahead and prepare, than to look back and regret".

Did I read, "FIVE smooth stones"? Actually, one was all he needed, but he had five.

Why five? Those five smooth stones are symbolic of David's preparation for victory — his preparation for overcoming the most outrageous odds. I suggest that they are symbolic of the reasons why David gained the victory over the forces of evil.

For those of us with a Goliath in our life or for those who dream of doing great things for God, then this story is for you.

Stone Number 1: Making the Right Choices

It has been wisely said that "it is choice not chance that determines our destiny."

The fact is that we are where we are today mostly because of choices we have made in the past.

Furthermore, we will be where we are in five, ten, twenty years time, and in eternity — based on choices we have or will yet make.

Floyd Lane, a talented basketball player who attended City College in New York in 1951, accepted a $3,000 bribe to shave points in just three games. Because other players were doing this, he decided to go with the group.

Big mistake. He and the other players got caught, arrested, and expelled from school.

For the next 23 years he was unable to get a job as a player or a coach in sports because of what he had done. Finally, in 1974 his old college employed him as a coach.

When we make mistakes, which we all do from time to time, it's encouraging to know that we still have the choice to put things right if feasible.

Fortunately, when we admit what we have done, God forgives us.

And where possible, where we have hurt others, we need to make amends for what we have done. We also need to forgive ourselves.

The important thing is to think first, pray, and make wise choices from now on.

K Albans wrote that at a Residents' Meeting in one of the Methodist Nursing Care Homes, someone spoke up to bemoan the fact that when ice cream was on the menu, it was always vanilla.

"Not a problem," said the Manager, and promptly dispatched the chef to the supermarket to buy some other flavours.

So the next time ice cream was on offer, there was a choice of vanilla, chocolate and strawberry flavours. But everyone who had ice cream that day, and indeed most days, chose vanilla!

We need to make our own choices in life.

Our parents gave us life, but they cannot live it for us.

Our parents can teach us things, but they cannot make us learn.

Our parents can give us directions, but they cannot be there to lead us.

Our parents can allow us freedom, but they cannot account for it.

Our parents can take us to church, but they cannot make us believe.

Our parents can coach us to determine right from wrong, but they cannot always decide for us.

Our parents can buy us beautiful clothes, but they cannot make us beautiful inside.

Our parents can offer us advice, but they cannot accept it for us.

Our parents can give us love, but they cannot force it upon us.

Our parents can teach us to share, but they cannot make us unselfish.

Our parents can demonstrate to us respect, but they cannot force us to show honour.

Our parents can advise us about friends, but cannot choose them for us.

Our parents can instruct us about sex, but they cannot keep us pure.

Our parents can tell us the facts of life, but they cannot build our reputation.

Our parents can inform us about alcohol, but they cannot say "no" for us.

Our parents can warn us about drugs, but they cannot prevent us from using them.

Our parents can tell us about lofty goals, but they cannot achieve them for us.

Our parents can teach us about kindness, but they cannot force us to be kind.

Our parents can warn us about sin, but they cannot make us moral.

Our parents can love us as a child, but they cannot place us in God's family.

Our parents can pray for us, but they cannot make us walk with God.

Our parents can teach us about Jesus, but they cannot make us accept Jesus as our Lord.

Our parents can advise us how to live, but they cannot give us eternal life.

Our parents can only love us with unconditional love and leave us to make the choices ourselves.

David made a choice. David chose to go to battle, and he chose to go with stones, a sling and his God.

Quora Digest tells us that “Ancient armies regularly used slingers as elite ranged units, not just shepherds with rocks.”

“A skilled slinger could launch a projectile at around 100 mph with lethal accuracy at 130+ yards. The projectiles they used could pierce armour and shatter bones”.

Archaeologists found actual slinger stones from various sites with "catch this" or "take that" inscribed on them suggesting that ancient soldiers had a sense of humour.

The Benjaminites in the region were famous for having slingers who could *"sling a stone at a hair and not miss."*

The Balearic Islands produced such effective slingers that major powers fought to recruit them. These warriors trained from childhood, much like David would have while protecting his flocks.

Archaeological evidence from the right time period shows sling stones could easily reach the kinetic

energy needed to penetrate bronze helmets.

If you were fighting someone approximately twice your height, and you had the chance to select a stone, what kind of stone would you choose?

Monsignor Arthur Tonne, in jest, suggested that "the guy with muscles always loses to the guy with a pocketful of rocks".

Maybe it would be the nastiest, most jagged rock we could find. Preferably something with a sharp edge on it. Right?

But that is not what David either chose or used. And in that we have our first two lessons.

Pebble Beach on the coast of California is a well-known tourist spot.

Ceaseless waves thunder ashore and dash the beach. The pitiless pounding of the waves tosses and grinds the stones together. They are dashed against the rugged, ageless cliffs.

This action goes on year after year. The result is round, polished stones that are collected by tourists as ornaments.

Near Pebble Beach is a quiet cove. A natural formation serves as a breakwater. Sheltered by the cliff are numerous stones.

They are unsought and unwanted. They have been spared the wear caused by the pounding waves. They have remained rough and unpolished.

When testing times come, we may be buffeted about; but the rough edges are knocked off of our lives. The friction of trials can cause wonderful features to be brought to the surface.

Believers who understand the friction of trials will be able to face life's hard times.

Many years ago there was an occasion when my younger brother Colin was unemployed.

He found an advertisement in the newspaper for a shepherd, no experience needed and full training provided.

As we lived in the busy city of Christchurch at the time, he liked the idea of becoming a country shepherd.

So he optimistically packed a bag and I drove

him in my car far into the country, to an isolated sheep station in South Canterbury.

I waited in the car while he applied for the job and then left him there when it was confirmed that his application was successful.

He was introduced to the other staff and assigned accommodation in a little shepherd's shack next to the shearing sheds.

A week later he telephoned me and asked me to collect him as he had resigned.

It seems that the other farm hands were into drinking and socialising each night and, not wanting to join in to that rough lifestyle, at dusk he retreated to his little shack each night and sat alone — no TV, no books, nothing to do but rest and wait frustratingly for the dawn to appear.

The dull shepherding job that I told you about was a smoothing process for David.

The book *Patriarchs & Prophets* has this observation, "As Moses was trained for his work, so the Lord was fitting the son of Jesse to become the guide of His chosen people. In his watch-care for his

flocks, he was gaining an appreciation of the care that the Great Shepherd has for the sheep of His pasture."

Sometimes what we are doing is boring. Sometimes our task may be under our ability. We could do a more important job. Sometimes we get treated a little rough by life Sometimes we can have painful, even unexplained, suffering.

But these things make for a smooth stone. And that is what we want to be if we are going to be able to do anything for the Lord.

Joni Eareckson Tada wrote, "With profound potential for good, suffering can also be a destroyer. Suffering can pull families together, uniting them through hardship, or it can rip them apart in selfishness and bitterness."

"Suffering can file all the rough edges off your character, or it can further harden you. It all depends on us. On how we respond.

Remember I suggested that our natural instinct would be to choose a jagged rock? How well would a jagged rock fly?

It seems that it has only been in the last twenty

years or so that it has been popular to take a circle and draw a smiley face on it. You know what I mean, the little stick drawing with the words "Have a nice day."

Long before anyone else ever even thought of this a golfer that I know tells me that he was regularly putting smiley faces on circles.

He did it unintentionally when he played golf. If he didn't hit the golf ball in the right place, it left a deep curved cut on the face of the ball.

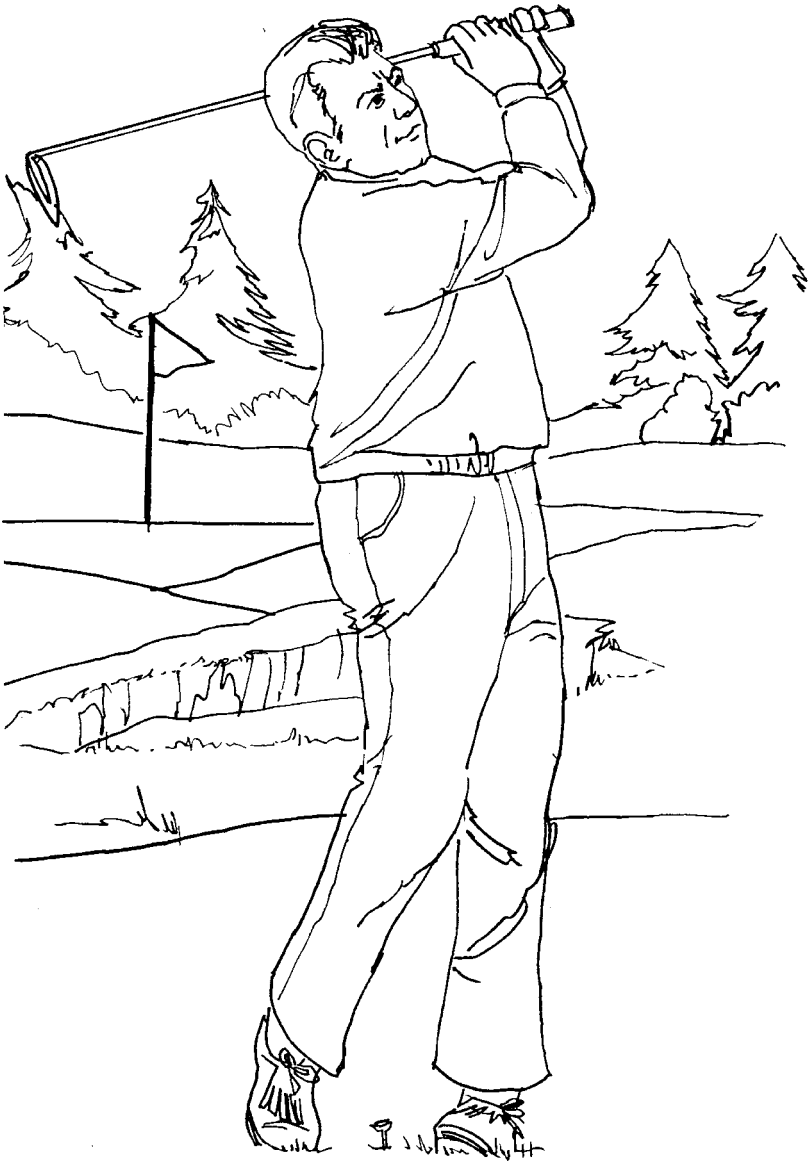
He says that he had the happiest set of golf balls that you could imagine. They all had smiles.

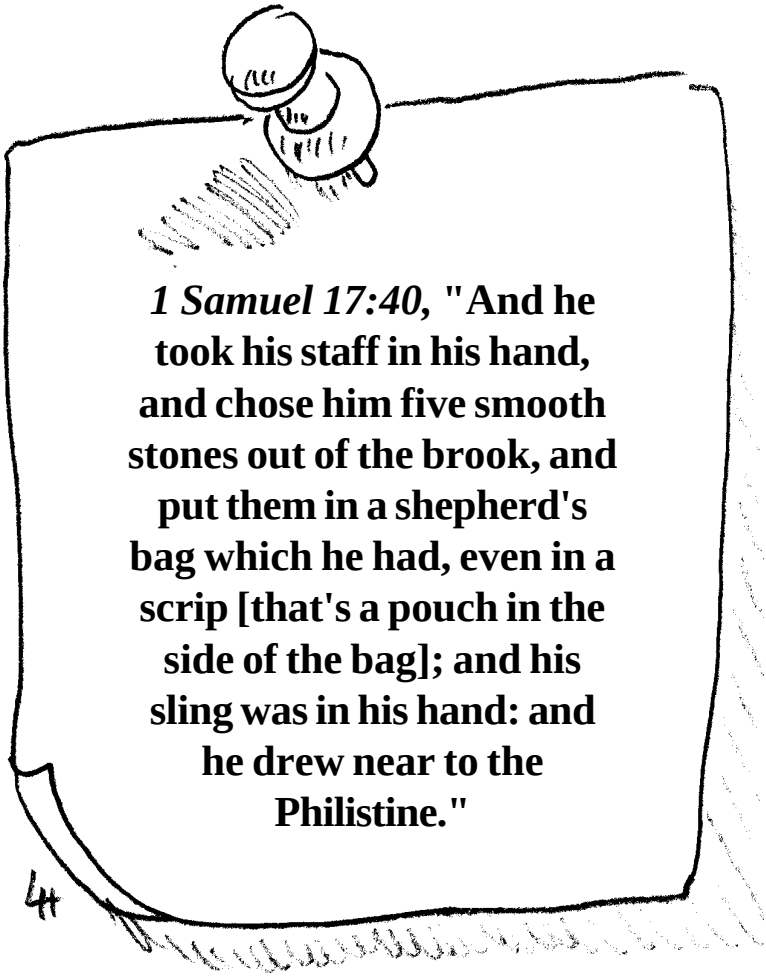
And that taught him some basic lessons about aerodynamics. Golf balls with big cuts on the surface don't fly nearly as well or as straight as properly shaped golf balls.

Basic aerodynamics dictates that if you put a jagged irregular rock in a sling and threw it, it would fly anywhere excepting straight to the target.

When David chose an instrument to accomplish the Lord's will, he chose something that would hit only the target and not miss.

I think that this is an important point when attacking the problems in our life. Try not create unnecessary trouble.





1 Samuel 17:40, **"And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip [that's a pouch in the side of the bag]; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine."**

Stone Number 2: Not Returning Insults

David and Moses are two apparently larger-than-life heroes of the Old Testament.

In Exodus 5 we find Moses approaching Pharoah to release the Israelites from slavery. There were a lot of things that Moses could have theoretically discussed with Pharoah, but he kept narrowly to the topic, he didn't fly all over like a jagged rock. He simply told Pharoah that he was to let the people go.

And that is our second point. Smooth stones fly straight. Now because I previously mention golf, you may argue that golf balls have between 300and 500 dimples and are definitely not smooth.

True, a smooth ball creates a large wake of low-pressure air behind it, which increases drag. Dimples create a turbulent boundary layer that energizes the air, allowing it to cling to the ball's surface longer. This attached airflow reduces the size of the wake, thus minimizing drag and increasing lift by interacting with the airflow.

A more efficient and attached airflow creates more lift, allowing the ball to stay in the air longer and travel farther in a high vertical arc. David didn't want a stone to travel far, just travel hard and straight.

Smooth stones fly straight. How many times at work, at home or in the church have you heard someone complain about a specific problem? Before you know it, the original problem is almost forgotten because now the issue has turned to a debate over personalities and who has insulted whom.

Smooth stones fly straight to the target. They do not create unnecessary trouble.

A couple drove down a country road for several miles, not saying a word.

An earlier discussion had led to an argument and neither of them wanted to concede their position.

As they passed a barnyard of mules, goats, and pigs, the wife asked sarcastically, "Relatives of yours?"

"Yes," the husband replied, "in-laws."

Yes, smooth stones fly straight to the target and do not create unnecessary trouble.

In`1 Samuel 17:26-28 we find the symbolism of the 3rd and 4th smooth stones.

1 Samuel 17:26-28 - "And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God? And the people answered him after this manner, saying, So shall it be done to the man that killeth him. And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle."

How would you like a brother like Eliab? Hardly an encourager.

According to my journal, back in 1958, as I was leaving for church one Sunday morning, my mother said to me, "Lionel, your hair is sticking up at the back. It may need brushing down."

I replied, "Thanks Mum. I hadn't noticed it when I looked in the mirror."

My brother Edward, standing nearby said, "I guess for Lionel, just looking in the mirror would be scary enough to make his hair stand up on end!"

Look at what David's brother insinuates about young David: With whom leave? (David is irresponsible.) Few sheep? (David has low value and his job in life is unimportant.) Conceited and wicked heart. (Well, that's self explanatory)

How many of us could withstand criticism like that? You want to do or are doing some voluntary job and what do people say to you? "You are irresponsible." "You are unimportant." "You are doing it for selfish reasons."

Perhaps this is what you face at work when you try to do the right thing.

The expected thing for David to do would be to throw the insult back. Or perhaps to say, "You know big brother, you are right. I think I'll be heading back to my few sheep and I'll let you contend with that 11 foot guy without me."

Quora Digest shared an example of returning an insult in the story of a soldier stationed in Iraq who

received a letter from his girlfriend.

The letter read as follows:

"Dear Alberto:

I can no longer continue this relationship, the distance that separates us is too great.

I have to admit that I've cheated on you twice since you left, and I don't think you or I deserve this.

Please return the photo I sent you, with love.... Daniela".

The severely heart-wounded soldier asked all his comrades to give him photos of their girlfriends, sisters, friends, cousins, etc.

Along with Daniela's photo, he included all those photos he had collected from her friends.

There were 57 photos in the envelope and a note that said:

"Dear Daniela:

Forgive me but I can't remember who you are.

Please find your photo in the package and return the rest to me. ... Alberto".

However, unlike Alberto, David neither returned the insult nor gave up.

He quietly let the offence go. He let the insult roll off his back. You see, insults do not stick to a smooth stone.

We see the attitude of David's big brother. What is David's attitude about this whole thing?

Remember what he said in verse 26? "for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

Now lets look at verse 36.

1 Samuel 17:36-37, "Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. 37 David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee."

Now jump down to verse 45

1 Samuel 17:45-48, "Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel,

whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands. And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine."

How would you characterize David's attitude? Perhaps this is the best of David's smooth stones. A young man is outraged over the insult to the honour of his Lord.

Rarely do we see anything like this today, nor even hear any talk about it.

Let me give you an example. In sports such as football, about which, I confess, I know very little, I do know that there are at least two methods of play in a match. At any given time, there is the offensive team and the defensive team.

The defensive team can keep from losing, but with rare exceptions it cannot actually win the game. It is the offensive team that makes the points that win the game.

Our attitude towards problems is usually defensive. We encourage others not to be discouraged over difficulties. We talk about not losing faith. We make our timid request that the Lord will set things straight and make them right. We act like we are in a "holding action."

Where is our offensive? Where is the conviction that the Lord is being mocked, and we are going to do something about it?

I'm not talking about personal insults here, I'm talking about an attitude that says, as David did in verse 26, "Who is this [person] that he should defy the armies of the Living God?" We see this same attitude in verses 45-47 which we read earlier.

Stone Number 3: Taking Personal Responsibility

In 1893, George Bernard Shaw wrote, "People are always blaming the circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they can't find them, make them".

There is another side to this attitude stone that we ought to consider. Did you notice the difference in the way in which David talked about the Goliath problem as opposed to the recorded words of the Israelite soldiers?

Look at verse 25, "And the men of Israel said, Have ye seen this man that is come up? surely to defy Israel is he come up: and it shall be, that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel."

Goliath has just shouted his defiant challenge; David has heard it and the others have run away. These

soldiers say, "The King with give wealth to the man who kills him."

The unsaid implication is that will be man who kills him but not me. An argument for what they won't do. David on the other hand is talking about what he will do.

David's big brother accuses him of being conceited and says that he really came only to watch and not do anything. In verse 32, the text is explicit about this concept of David taking personal responsibility to set things right. It says,

1 Samuel 17:32, "And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine."

David took personal responsibility for vindicating the Lord.

A young man applying for a job as usher in a theatre was asked by the owner, "In case of fire, what would you do?"

"Oh, don't be concerned about me," was the reply. "I'd be able to escape immediately."

Of course, he didn't get the job because he did not even think of his responsibility toward others.

Being personally responsible for our own actions and for what needs to be done is very important.

We must also follows Paul's advice - Philippians 2:4, 5, "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus" (New International Version).

In one of his many books, Tony Campolo makes this observation: "Wives feel resentment when it is assumed that they are responsible for everything that goes wrong around the house."

"This is epitomized in the television ad in which the husband is upset because there's a "ring around the collar." The wife breaks into tears because her detergent has not removed the dirt from her husband's shirt. The ring around the collar is seen as telltale evidence of her failure."

"The ad never asks the obvious question — Why didn't he wash his neck?"

The Reverend Lowell D. Streiker writes that (and

I quote), "Everyone should have a spouse, because there are a number of things that go wrong that one can't blame on the government".

This failure to take responsibility is not David's attitude here.

The honour of his Lord is at stake and he will take personal responsibility to change this situation.

Stone Number 4: A Godly Attitude

Charles Swindoll said: "The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life."

"Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company, a church, a home."

"The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past, we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string that we have, and that is our attitude."

"I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it. And so it is with you. We are in charge of our attitudes."

David was an expert with the sling. David was outraged at the insult to the Lord. But he never thought

that his skill with the sling or the fact that he had a smooth stone would give him the victory.

In verse 42 Goliath accuses David of coming at him with a stick. But David tells him in verse 45 to forget the stick as David comes against Goliath in the name of the Lord.

The battle, all of it, was the Lords. David's attitude was that he rest in Him. David and his smooth stones were only the instruments that God used for God's own victory.

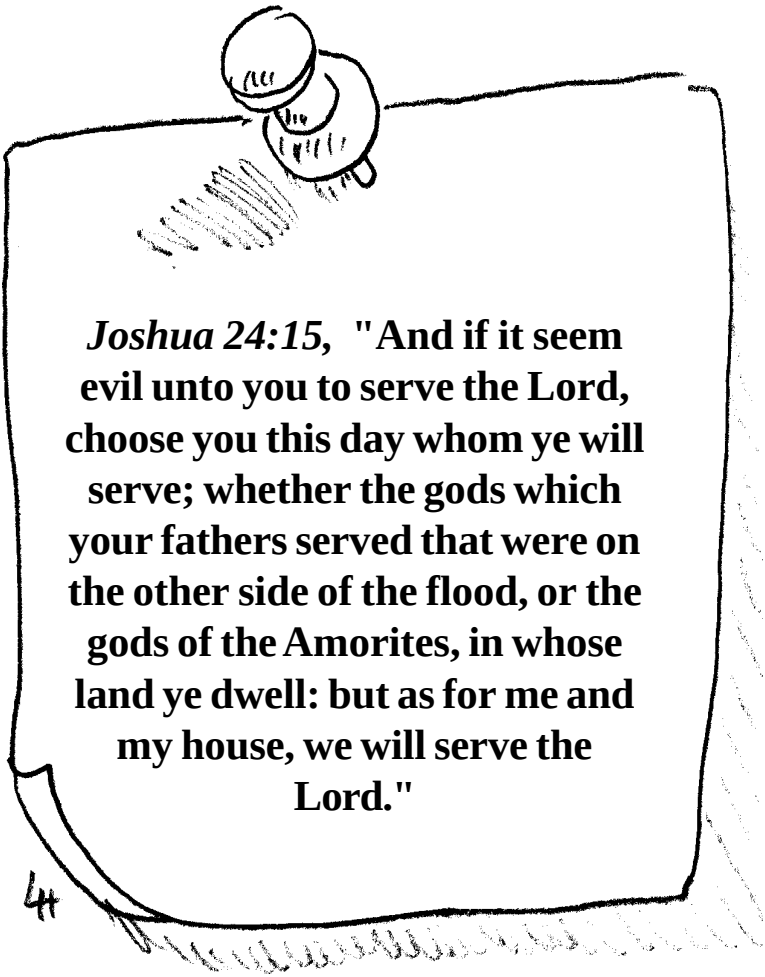
Did you ever wonder why Jesus did not choose the smartest, best read, religious leaders of the day to be his disciples? Did you ever wonder why the New Testament just overflows with warnings about being rich and powerful?

The smart man trusts to his intelligence. The educated man trusts to his education. The rich man trusts to his wealth. The politician trusts his arguments, and a skilled athelete or ancient warrior with a sling-shot trusts his practiced aim.

But not David. David knew for sure that he and his smooth stones were only the instruments that God

would use for the victory.

If I lose sight of that, then I lose the key to the victory.



Joshua 24:15, **"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."**

Stone Number 5: Reliance on God

Miller and Wunderlich recount a well known parable which tells of a religious man who was caught in a flood.

As his house is surrounded by the rising waters he kneels in prayer assured that the Lord will save him.A

As the water get higher he resorts to climbing on top of his roof, as he continues to pray. Calling out to him in attempts to save him, two men a rowboat pass by. But he declines their help and calls out that the lord will save him.

As the waters gradually reaches his waist a motorboat passes by with another offer of help. Again the man calls out "the Lord will save me."

A National Guard helicopter finally flies over dropping a rope ladder. Now the waters have risen to the man's neck but instead of panicking he calls " the Lord will save me." Suddenly the man's head is submerged under water and he drowns.

According to the parable, when reaching heaven he questioned the Lord. "Why did you not save me when you saw I was drowning?" I have complete faith in you and you let me down."

"I didn't let you down, responds the Lord. "I sent you a rowboat. I then sent you a motorboat and then a helicopter. Why did you refuse our help?

David didn't shy away from accepting God's help. God could have easily killed Goliath without David, but God works in partnership with men and women.

He not only allowed David to have a part in the victory, but we find David acknowledging this partnership by giving God the credit.

Embarrassingly, our 5th stone turns out to be no stone at all. Let me explain.

Do you really think that David alone could have defeated Goliath?. Maybe ... but the odds against this would have been many to one. Certainly those odds would never have supported the seemingly arrogant statements that David made that we just read together.

Certainly the smooth stones did not do it. David could have dredged that stream dry of smooth stones

and they never would have caused him to win over Goliath.

The 5th smooth "stone" is David's absolute reliance on the Lord.

The smooth stones that we have discussed will not give us the victory. They are merely the instruments for victory.

They are what God uses in our hands. We need to have them in our hands to be used.

We need to know them so that we will not lose faith and so that we will know the landmarks:

When we go through the smoothing process, not to lose faith.

When we are unnecessarily flying around insulting others, God is not using us.

When we are criticized for a good work we must not let go of God.

When we have an attitude that is jealous for the honour of God, He is going to carry us through.

So here we have the five stones: making the right choices; not returning insults, taking personal responsibility, having a Godly attitude and developing an absolute reliance on the Lord.

Let us pray that like David, with his five smooth stones, we too may be used by God to have victory in our lives.

Daily we are presented with choices. But the story we have shared today has reminded us that with God's wisdom we can choose what is right and have victory. May God's victory be ours today.

I express my thanks to the volunteers who edit and adapt these messages from audio recordings of a selection of my public presentations.

— Lionel Hartley, 2009